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ED 011 223 RE 000 013

BEGINNING READING PATTERNS AND PRESCHOOL EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS.
IN EDUC. HORIZ., 44/3-9, FALL 1965
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PUB DATE 65

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.09 HC-$0.36 9P.

DESCRIPTORS- *PSYCHOLOGICAL PATTERNS, *PRESCHOOL CHILDREN, *READING ACHIEVEMENT, *READING DEVELOPMENT, *EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS, PRESCHOOL EVALUATION, READING PATTERNS, STUDENT ATTITUDES, GRADE 1, READING RESEARCH, READING FAILURE,

FOUR HYPOTHESES WERE INVESTIGATED IN A STUDY DESIGNED TO DISCOVER WHETHER READING PATTERNS AND SUCCESS DURING CHILDREN'S PRIMARY YEARS COULD BE ANTICIPATED FROM EMOTIONAL CLASSIFICATIONS DETERMINED DURING THEIR PRESCHOOL YEARS. IT WAS HYPOTHESIZED THAT CHILDREN WITH EMOTIONAL DIFFICULTIES DURING PRESCHOOL YEARS WOULD HAVE MORE DIFFICULTY LEARNING TO READ, FOLLOW DIFFERENT READING PATTERNS, AND HAVE MORE NEGATIVE ATTITUDES. ALSO, IT WAS HYPOTHESIZED THAT ASSESSMENT OF EMOTIONAL CLASSIFICATIONS DURING PRESCHOOL WOULD PROVIDE CLUES TO LATER READING DIFFICULTIES. THE SUBJECTS WERE 61 CHILDREN ENROLLED IN THE CAMPUS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MILWAUKEE. ALL WERE GIVEN AN EMOTIONAL CLASSIFICATION AT THE PRESCHOOL LEVEL BY A QUALIFIED SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST, BY A SOCIAL WORKER WHO VISITED THE MOTHER AT HOME, AND BY THE CHILDREN'S TEACHERS. CERTAIN READING PATTERNS WERE OUTLINED, AND THE CHILDREN WERE TESTED THREE TIMES EACH YEAR WITH THE GRAY ORAL READING PARAGRAPHS FOR EVIDENCE OF FOLLOWING THESE PATTERNS. READING ACHIEVEMENT WAS DETERMINED BY THE METROPOLITAN ACHIEVEMENT TEST GIVEN EACH SPRING. READING ATTITUDES WERE RATED BY A TRAINED RESEARCH ASSISTANT. IN GENERAL, ALL HYPOTHESES WERE ACCEPTED. IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION AND REFERENCES ARE PROVIDED. THIS ARTICLE IS A REPRINT FROM "EDUCATIONAL HORIZONS," FALL 1965. (RH)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

Educational Horizons, 44 (Fall, 1965

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ED011223

beginning reading patterns and preschool emotional problems

LURA M. CARRITHERS*

READING disability among school children is a major concern of the schools. A relationship of emotional disturbances to reading disability has been found by researchers. Redmont[1] found 67 per cent of the children in his reading project to be severely maladjusted. Robinson[2] found emotional problems in 43 per cent of the cases she treated.

The cause-effect relationship between emotional disturbance and reading disability in children has not been so specifically determined. Monroe[3] cites case studies where emotional stability and instability affect success in beginning reading. Caplan[4] has found the one aggravating the other in a vicious cycle. Miller[5] sees a possible relationship between reading level and preschool development.

It was the purpose of this study to discover whether reading patterns and success during children's primary years can be anticipated from emotional classifications determined during their preschool years.

This is a reading culture. Our children need to learn to read. Yet too many of them are having trouble. Based upon the fact that reading and emotional problems are often found together, that each aggravates the other, the author of this study wondered if emotional difficulties which might be observed at the preschool level would show a relationship to children's success in reading, to their patterns of reading, and to their attitudes toward reading during the primary years. She hypothesized that children with emotional difficulties during their preschool years—

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[1]Robert S. Redmont, "Description and Education of a Corrective Program for Reading Disability," *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 39:347-58, 1948.

[2]Helen Robinson, *Why Children Fail in Reading* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1946), pp. 155-57.

[3]Marion Monroe, *Growing into Reading* (Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1951), pp. 22-44.

[4]Hyman Caplan, M.D., "The Role of Deviant Maturation in the Pathogenesis of Anxiety, *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 26:94-107, 1956.

[5]Allan D. Miller, M.D., *The Role of the School System in a Mental Health Program*, Report on a 1954 mental health study (U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare: National Institute of Mental Health), p. 2.

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difficulties beyond those which are developmental: (1) would have more difficulty in learning to read than those children without such problems; (2) would follow different reading patterns, and experience different learning problems in primary reading; (3) would have more negative attitudes toward reading; and that (4) assessment of emotional classifications during preschool would provide clues to later reading difficulties.

To test these hypotheses she worked with three successive groups of children enrolled in the Campus Elementary School at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. There was a total of sixty-one children in this study.

All children were given an emotional classification at the preschool level. All were observed as to their reading behavior through the first grade. Observing three groups of children in the first grade, over three successive years, enabled the first group to be observed during their second and third grades also, and the second group, during their second grade. Thus these three groups were observed at the first grade level, two groups at the second grade level, and one group at the third grade level.

The average I.Q. of the children in this school was 115-120. They all came from homes where there was considerable encouragement for developing an interest in reading. Books were present in the home, parents themselves read, and they read to their children. Although no child enrolled in these groups was excluded from the study, this population, by its very nature, eliminated the low capacity and culturally deprived variables.

Emotional classifications were made from three viewpoints: (1) the school psychologist, who, with a second clinical psychologist, interpreted the *House-Tree-Person* projective personality test given to all subjects; (2) a social worker who interviewed the mother in the home, the interview designed to reveal the mother's attitude toward the child; and (3) the teachers who worked with the children daily.

Each of these raters was given equal weight. Each child thus received a weighted score and was placed into one of three classifications: (1) those showing problems beyond those of developmental nature; (2) those showing no such problems; and (3) those about whom there was doubt as to which of the two groups they belonged. There were seventeen children in the "have problems" group; twenty-one, in the "doubtful" group; and twenty-three in the "do not have problems" group.

In order to determine reading success the children were given the *Metropolitan Achievement Test Form B, Primary I Battery* in the spring of each year. The test scored them in: (1) word knowledge; (2) word discrimination; and (3) reading.

Reading patterns included: (1) slow start with steady rise; (2) spurts; (3) gradual growth; and also specific reading problems. In order to determine these patterns the *Gray Oral Reading Paragraphs Test* was administered three times a year to each group. Specific reading problems determined through this test are: (1) omissions; (2) insertions; (3) repetitions; (4) substitutions, and (5) mispronunciations.

Attitudes toward reading were observed and scored by a trained research assistant on the basis of her observations of the children toward both the *Gray Oral*

Reading Paragraphs Test and self-selected material. Attitudes included (1) enthusiasm; (2) willing acceptance; (3) unwilling acceptance; and (4) blocking against.

The chi-square test of significance was used to compare the emotional classification scores and the achievement dimensions measured by the Metropolitan Achievement Test. The same statistical test was used to compare the emotional classification scores and the children's attitudes toward reading.

Patterns of reading of the three groups and their specific reading problems were shown through graphs. Specific problems as evidenced through both the *Gray Oral Reading Paragraphs Test* and the self-selected materials were shown.

Findings and Conclusions

1. There was more disagreement than agreement found among the three scorers of the emotional classifications.

a. All three agreed on the classification of nineteen of the children. Disagreement was found among the classifications of forty-two children.
b. Disagreement was greatest in the "doubtful" area.
c. Agreement was the greatest in the "do not have problems" area.
d. In fifty-nine of the sixty-one cases two of the three scorers agreed with each other. The disagreement was between these two scorers and the third scorer. In two cases disagreement was found among all three scorers.
e. Agreement was quite even between each pair of scorers:
Psychologist and social worker—11 agreements
psychologist and teachers —14 agreements
Social worker and teachers —15 agreements

It was concluded from this finding that all three scores were necessary. Each saw the child from a different point of view. An emotional classification based on one or two of these viewpoints would be inadequate. All three should be taken into consideration.

2. Association between word knowledge and emotional problem assessments was found to be significant at the .05 level of confidence among the first grade children.

3. Association between word discrimination and emotional problem assessments was found to be significant at the .01 level of confidence among the first grade children.

4. Association between reading ability and emotional problem assessments was found to be significant at the .01 level of confidence among the first grade children.

From findings in two, three, and four, it was concluded that among first grade children association between reading achievement as measured by a standardized reading test and their emotional problem assessments before they enter the reading situation is statistically significant in regard to word knowledge. The association is highly significant in regard to emotional problem assessments and word discrimination and reading scores.

5. Association between word knowledge and emotional problem assessments was found to be significant at the .05 level of confidence among the second grade children.

6. Association between word discrimination and emotional problem assessments was found to be significant at the .02 level of confidence among the second grade children.

7. Association between reading ability and emotional problem assessments was found to be significant at the .01 level of confidence among the second grade children.

From findings five, six, and seven it was concluded that the associations found between reading achievement and emotional problem assessments made before children enter the reading situation which were found at the first grade level, hold through the second grade. Association between word knowledge and emotional problem assessments are statistically significant, and the association between word discrimination and emotional problem assessments and reading ability and emotional problem assessments, highly significant at the second grade level as it had been at the first grade level.

The number of children in the third grade was too small to be handled statistically. The scores could only be tabulated and examined for pattern.

8. The pattern of the association between word knowledge and emotional problem assessments revealed more high than low achievers among the children in the "do not have problems" classification and more low than high achievers among the children in the "have problems" classification.

9. The pattern of association between word discrimination and emotional problem assessments revealed more high than low achievers among the children in the "do not have problems" classification and more low than high achievers among the children in the "have problems" classification.

10. The pattern of association between reading ability and emotional problem assessments revealed more high than low achievers among the children in the "do not have problems" classification and more low than high achievers among the children in the "have problems" classification.

From findings eight, nine, and ten it was concluded that although the numbers in the third grade classifications in this study were too small to be handled statistically, the same pattern holds through the third grade as had been found in the first and second grades, *i.e.,* more high than low achievers among the children in the "do not have problems" and more low than high achievers among the children in the "have problems" classifications which were made at the preschool level before the children entered the reading program.

From findings two to ten it was concluded that children with emotional difficulties, determined at the preschool level, have greater difficulty learning to read than those children without such problems and that the reading difficulty stays with them throughout the primary grades. It was revealed statistically significant and highly significant through the second grade. Observed patterns indicated similar tendency through the third grade.

11. A graph of the reading patterns of the three emotionally classified groups revealed that they were different.

a. The "have problems" group was the only one which made no measurable gain during the first semester.
b. The "have problems" group made its greatest spurt, and a greater spurt than either of the other two groups, during its second and third semesters.
c. Growth for this group was gradual after this spurt.
d. The "doubtful" group made the most gradual growth of any of the three groups.
e. Because some of the children of the "doubtful" group made perfect scores during the second semester of third grade, the test did not reveal the heights to which they would have gone nor the pattern of their growth during this semester.
f. The "do not have problems" group made a gradual growth during its first semester, took a spurt during its second semester, and made a gradual growth during its third semester, the first semester of second grade. Because by this time some of the children made perfect scores on the test it was impossible to get a true picture of the pattern this group might have followed through the last half of this study.

From these findings it was concluded that children with different emotional difficulties do follow different reading patterns during their initial reading experiences. Those with emotional difficulties make the slowest start, take a spurt after they get started, then make gradual gains. The children with doubtful emotional difficulties make quite steady gains through the primary grades. The children without emotional difficulties make gains from the beginning, take a spurt after they get started, then continue to rise. The degree of rise was not determinable through the measure used in this study.

12. A graph of specific reading errors revealed little difference between the three emotionally classified groups in the specific types of reading problems experience. It revealed greater similarity than difference between the types of errors made by children of all classifications. All of them in all emotionally classified groups made the most errors in mispronunciation. They made the next greatest number in substitutions with comparatively few in other types of errors. This was true with both the Gray Oral Reading Paragraphs and the self-selected materials. The similiarity was found at all three grade levels.

From this finding coupled with those on achievement and reading patterns it was concluded that all children experience similar specific reading problems in their beginning reading experiences but that those with fewer emotional difficulties experience fewer of them, progress at more steady rates, and achieve higher attainments.

13. Association between attitudes toward reading and emotional problem assessments was found to be significant at the .001 level of confidence among the first grade children.

14. Association between attitudes toward reading and emotional problem assessments was found to be significant at the .01 level of confidence among the second grade children.

15. Association between attitudes toward reading and emotional problem assessments among the third grade children was found to be of no statistical significance.

From findings thirteen, fourteen, and fifteen it was concluded that children with emotional difficulties discovered at the preschool level have less positive attitudes toward beginning reading in the first and second grades than those children without such difficulties. By the time the children reach third grade these less positive attitudes have been overcome.

16. Associations were found statistically significant and highly significant between emotional problem assessments made during preschool and success in reading through the second grade with similar tendencies indicated through the third grade.

17. Different patterns of reading were found between the children of the different emotional problem assessments made during preschool.

18. No association was found between the children of different emotional problem assessments made during preschool and specific types of reading difficulties they experience.

19. Associations which were highly significant were found in attitudes toward reading and the children of the different emotional problem assessments made during preschool. These differences in attitudes held throughout second grade

20. No association was found between the children of different emotional problem assessments made during preschool and attitudes toward reading at the third grade level.

From findings sixteen through twenty it was concluded that assessment of emotional classifications during preschool do provide clues to reading difficulties during the primary grades.

Conclusions drawn from the study are summarized as follows:

1. Children with emotional difficulties determined at the preschool level have greater difficulty learning to read than children without such problems and that the difficulty remains with them throughout the primary grades.

2. Children with emotional difficulties determined at the preschool level follow different reading patterns during their primary experiences, those with the greatest emotional difficulty making the slowest start.

3. Few differences in the specified types of reading problems are experienced by the children of different emotional problem classifications. All of the children regardless of emotional problem classification, experience the greatest number of specific reading problems in mispronunciations and substitutions.

4. Children with emotional difficulties determined at the preschool level have less positive attitudes toward reading through the second grade. These less positive attitudes tend to disappear at the third grade level.

5. Assessment of emotional classifications during preschool do provide clues to reading difficulties during the primary grades.

6. Children with fewer emotional difficulties determined at the preschool level experience fewer reading problems, progress at more steady rates, have more positive attitudes toward reading, and achieve higher attainments.

Implications for Education

Implications for education such as the following may be drawn from this study.

1. Because all children regardless of emotional problem classifications meet

the same specific reading problems largely those of mispronunciation and substitutions, this would appear to be an area which would merit special attention in the primary grades. Are more careful habits of observation needed? Is a larger sight vocabulary needed? Is greater phonetic skill needed? Is greater skill in structural analysis needed? Answers to these questions might enable teachers to set up programs for alleviating this difficulty.

2. Because children with emotional problems determined during their preschool years have more difficulty with beginning reading than children free from such problems, it would seem that:

a. Preschool programs designed to promote sound mental health among preschool children are of tremendous importance.

b. The employment of a psychologist and a social worker would be of great asset to the school system.

Reprinted from
EDUCATIONAL HORIZONS
Fall, 1965